

The National Security Act of 1947 (Public Law 253 -- 80th Congress), the so-called "Unification Act", took several steps forward in connection with the national security organization. It set up a new organization known as the National Military Establishment under a Secretary of Defense. The old War and Navy Departments were replaced by three Executive Departments known as the Departments of the Army, the Navy and the Air Force; all of them headed by Secretaries of Cabinet rank.

Within the framework of the National Military Establishment, several groups which had existed as joint boards were given legal status together with certain additional groups which had not previously existed. These new statutory organizations were the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the War Council, the Munitions Board, and the Research & Development Board. Under the Joint Chiefs of Staff, which consisted of the Chiefs of Staff of the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force, and the Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief, if there is one (Admiral Leahy has been the only Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief), there was established a joint staff of 100 officers, to be drawn approximately equally from the three Services. The Secretary of Defense was to be assisted by three Special Assistants to the Secretary, and these were set up with a division of labor roughly of legislative and legal; administrative, budget and fiscal; and politico-military duties, respectively.

In addition to the National Military Establishment, the Act set up a National Security Council to advise the President on the integration of domestic, foreign and military policy. Under the direction of the National Security Council, a Central Intelligence Agency was established to coordinate the foreign intelligence activities of those departments and agencies of the Government concerned with the national security.

The Act also established a National Security Resources Board to advise the President as to the coordination of military, industrial, and civilian mobilization.

- 2 -

After a year's operation, the first Secretary of Defense, Mr. Forrestal, and also the Hoover Commission on the reorganization of the Government, came to note certain deficiencies in the working of this organization which required drastic remedy. The primary problem was in the position of the Secretary of Defense itself due to the lack of clear-cut statutory authority in that office to reach firm decisions binding upon the three Services. Secondly, the problem of budgetary control over the three Services was lacking to such a degree that it was impossible to ascertain exactly how much money was being spent on specific programs. Amendments to the National Security Act were therefore proposed in the 81st Congress, and were passed by the Senate. The Armed Services Committee in the House originally refused to accept these amendments, the need for which had been high-lighted by the unfortunate death of Secretary Forrestal. The House Armed Services Committee however reported out, and the House passed those amendments concerning budget and fiscal procedures which subsequently became Title 4 of Public Law 216 of the 81st Congress, the National Security Act Amendments of 1949. At the subsequent conference between the conferees of the Senate and the House of Representatives, the remaining amendments which had been passed by the Senate were restored to the bill and accepted by the House, and the full measure was then passed.

Certain changes are worthy of note. The first of these was the change in the composition of the National Security Council. There had been some complaint that the Council was too heavily weighted by the military, so the three Service Secretaries were removed from the Council, and the Department of Defense is represented only by the Secretary of Defense. The Vice President has also been added to the membership.

An Executive Department, the Department of Defense, was established under a Secretary of Defense. The Departments of the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force, however, were reduced from Executive Departments and Cabinet rank to so-called military departments without Cabinet rank. The position of Deputy Secretary of Defense was also established along with three Assistant Secretaries of Defense. It had been found in the National Military Establishment, particularly in relations with the Congress and other Departments, that the title of Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense was not accorded the prestige

- 3 -

and hearing which the position warranted. For this reason the title was changed to Assistant Secretary of Defense, one of whom is to serve as the Comptroller of the Department.

The position of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was established, and the Joint Staff was increased to 210 officers. The relationships between the Secretary of Defense and the Munitions Board and the Research and Development Board received certain statutory readjustments.

The accompanying chart of the organization of the Department of Defense, dated 12 September 1949, is substantially correct. The only change is the elimination of the Assistant to the Secretary (Special Activities). Most of the work of this section comes within the Office of Foreign Military Affairs, which in turn comes under the direction of the Special Consultant to the Secretary of Defense on Politico-Military Affairs.